

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 CIAE-00 COME-00 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /084 W
-----114542 200615Z /23

R 191630Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7858
INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PINS, IS
SUBJECT: HISTADRUT POSTPONES ITS CONVENTION AS STRUGGLE FOR
REORGANIZATION CONTINUES

SUMMARY: HE HISTADRUT HAS DECIDED TO POSTPONE ITS CONVENTION
FROM OCTOBER 19 TO NOVEMBER 7 DUE TO LACK OF HOTEL
SPACE IN JERUSALEM. IN THE MEANTIME SHARP INTERNAL
DEBATES CONTINUE ABOUT THE SHAPE AND COMPOSITION OF THE
NEXT EXECUTIVE BUREAU. THE LIKUD IS INTENSIFYING ITS
EFFORTS TO PLAY AN INCREASING ROLE IN LABOR RELATIONS
AND TO PUSH THE ALIGNMENT INTO AN AGREEMENT TO APPORTION
LEISWIFV POSITIONS NOT ON THE BASIS OF THE WINNER TAKE
ALL, BUT PROPORTIONALLY ACCORDING TO THE ELECTORAL STRENGTH
ON THE MAJOR PARTIES. FOR THE TIME BEING GOVERNMENT-
HISTADRUT RELATIONS REMAIN RELATIVELY HARMONIOUS, WITH
NO SERIOUS CONFRONTATIONS IN SIGHT, DESPITE SOME PRESSURES
FROM MAPAM THAT HISTADRUT ASSUMEA MORE MILITANT OPPOSITON
ROLE. END SUMMARY

1. THE HISTADRUT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MET THE
EVENING OF AUGUST 16 TO DECIDE ON A NEW DATE FOR THE
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HISTADRUT CONVENTION. IT HAD BECOME NECESSARY TO RESCHEDULE
THE CONVENTION BECAUSE JERUSALEM HOTELS ARE UNABLE TO
ACCOMMODATE LARGE GROUPS OF VISITORS BETWEEN NOW AND
THE END OF THE YEAR. ACCORDINGLY IT WAS DECIDED TO
POSTPONE THE OPENING CEREMONY IN JERUSALEM FROM OCTOBER
19 TO NOVEMBER 7 AND THEN TO MOVE THE CONVENTION FOR
A THREE DAY WORKING SESSION TO TEL AVIV, WHERE HOTEL

SPACE REAMINS LESS OF A PROBLEM.

2. ORDINARILY HISTADRUT MIGHT HAVE ACCOMMODATED MOST DELEGATES IN ITS OWN BUILDINGS AND MEMBERS' HOMES. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF HISTADRUT SECRETARY GENERAL MESHEL'S SPECIAL EFFORTS TO HAVE MAXIMUM INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION, THE ACUTE HOTEL SHORTAGE HAD TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION. MOVING THE CONVENTION FROM JERUSALEM TO TEL AVIV WAS ONLY RELUCTANTLY APPROVED.

3. IN THE MEANTIME SHARP INTERNAL DEBATES ARE CONTINUING ON THE FUTURE COMPOSITION OF THE EXECUTIVE BUREAU. MESHEL WANTS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF BUREAU MEMBERS FROM 22 TO 20, THUS MINIMIZING PRESSURES FROM THE LABOR PARTY TO ACCOMMODATE UNEMPLOYED PARTY STALWARTS. AT PRESENT EACH BUREAU MEMBER IS ALSO THE HEAD OF A HISTADRUT DEPARTMENT. HENCE, THE FIRST PROPOSED STEP IS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DEPARTMENT HEADS FROM 20 TO 10 (TREASURER, TRADE UNION, WOMEN, HEVRAT OVDIM (ECONOMIC AND COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISES), ARABS, YOUTH, EDUCATION, SOCIAL SECURITY, LEGISLATION, ORGANIZATION). THE REMAINING TEN SEATS ARE TO BE ACCORDED TO FOUR KEY UNION GROUPS (METAL WORKERS, PUBLIC SERVICE, PROFESSIONALS, BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION), FOUR LABOR COUNCILS (TEL AVIV, HAIFA, JERUSALEM, BEERSHEVA) AND TWO WORKS COUNCILS OF MAJOR ENTERPRISES. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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4. THESE REFORM PROPOSALS HAVE RAISED QUESTIONS OF HOW THE BLOCK OF TEN TRADE UNION, LABOR AND WORKS COUNCIL SEATS ARE TO BE APPORTIONED SO AS TO GIVE BOTH MAPAI AND MAPAM EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION AND WHAT, IF ANY, ROLES THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL PARTY COUNCILS SHOULD PLAY IN SELECTING THE CANDIDATES. THERE WAS EVEN SOME SUGGESTION OF ACCORDING A SEAT TO AT LEAST ONE TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVE ELECTED ON A NON-PARTY BASIS. SUCH A MOVE COULD OPEN A POSSIBILITY TO LET A LIKUD MEMBER PARTICIPATE IN THE BUREAU. MOREOVER, MESHEL IS REPORTEDLY STILL CONSIDERING THE OPTION OF INVITING ONE OR TWO DMC REPRESENTATIVES TO JOIN THE EXECUTIVE BUREAU, DESPITE EARLIER ASSURANCES TO MAPAM THAT THE DMC WOULD NOT BE INVITED. CONSEQUENTLY THE BUREAU MAY EVENTUALLY HAVE TO BE ENLARGED RATHER THAN REDUCED.

5. ANOTHER STILL UNRESOLVED QUESTION IS WHAT ROLE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNIONS AND THE LOCAL LABOR AND WORKS COUNCILS WOULD BE ASSIGNED IN NATIONAL WAGE NEGOTIATIONS. HITHERTO THE HEAD OF THE TRADE

UNION DEPARTMENT WAS ALSO THE CHIEF NEGOTIATION OF LABOR CONTRACTS. BOTH GOVERNMENT AND EMPLOYERS WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE THIS ARRANGEMENT (PROBABLY SO WOULD MESHEL). HOWEVER, THE UNION LEADERS THEMSELVES ARE CHAFING AT THE BIT AND WOULD PREFER A MORE DECENTRALIZED NEGOTIATING ARRANGEMENT. MOREOVER, HERUT MILITANTS, WHO SEE IN DECENTRALIZATION AN OPPORTUNITY THAT THEY MAY ALSO BECOME INVOLVED IN WAGE NEGOTIATIONS AND UNION LEADERSHIP, ARE PUSHING IN THAT DIRECTION.

6. THE LIKUD FACTION F THE HISTADRUT HOPES TO USE THE CONVENTION TO ASSERT ITS STRENGTH--NEARLY ONE-THIRD OF THE MEMBERSHIP. FOR THE TIME BEING THE LABOR SCENE CONTINUES TO BE REMARKABLEY QUIET. THUS LIKUD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WILL BE ABLE TO POINT OUT THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING EARLIER PREDICATIONS, GOVERNMENT-HISTADRUT RELATIONS CONTINUE AS USUAL AND THAT HISTADRUT INSTITUTIONS FACE NO IMMEDIATE THREATS. EVEN PENDING LEGISLATION TO INTRODUCE COMPULSORY ARBITRATION AND TO NATIONALIZE HEALTH INSURANCE ARE LIKELY TO BE SHELVED TO AWAIT DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE COMING ROUNDS OF COST-OF-LIVING AND WAGE NEGOTIATIONS.

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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7. DESPITE HIS OUTSPOKEN MILITANCY AGAINST HISTADRUT (SEE TEL AVIV 5653), DEPUTY MINISTER YORAM ARIDOR, CURRENTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR LABOR AFFAIRS, HAS EARNED SOME CREDIT FOR HIS PERSONAL SETTLEMENT OF LABOR DISPUTES, INCLUDING THE THORNY PROBLEM OF EL AL AIRLINE PILOTS AND CABIN CREWS. HE PROMISES QUICK DECISIONS AND IF HE FEELS THAT UNION CLAIMS HAVE MERIT HE TENDS TO APPROVE THEM. SO FAR HE APPEARS TO HAVE DENIED FEW CLAIMS. THIS REFLECTS A RADICALLY DIFFERENT APPROACH, PRODUCING LITTLE PUBLIC REACTION TO COSTS OR MERITS OF SUCH CLAIMS. HOWEVER, ON OVERALL WAGE AND COST-OF-LIVING QUESTIONS, ARIDOR WILL NOT BE GIVEN A DECISIVE ROLE BECAUSE THESE QUESTIONS WILL HAVE TO BE DECIDED ON THE BASIS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S GENERAL ECONOMIC PLANNING, BUT EVEN HERE THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE LIKE-LIHOOD FOR CONFRONTATION.

8. RELYING ON THE PRESTIGE WHICH LIKUD CONTINUES TO ENJOY, ITS REPRESENTATIVE WILL DEMAND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN ALL HISTADRUT ORGANS, INCLUDING THE EXECUTIVE BUREAU. THEY THEREBY HOPE EITHER TO PRESS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TOWARD MAKING INROAD ON THE ALIGNMENT'S MAJORITY CONTROL OF THE HISTADRUT OR TO PUSH FOR A GRADUAL ELIMINATION OF PARTY POLITICS FROM HISTADRUT ELECTIONS. (THERE ARE DIFFERENCES HERE BETWEEN LIKUD FACTIONS; THE LATTER PROPOSAL IS PUSHED PARTICULARLY BY THE LIBERALS, WHEREAS HERUT PREFERS RETENTION OF THE POLITICAL LABELS OF ALL HISTADRUT LEADERS AND OFFICIALS AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AT ALL LEVELS.)

9. LIKUD LEADERS POINT OUT THAT, WHILE THEY GAINED ALMOST ONE-THIRD OF THE OVERALL VOTE IN THE HISTADRUT ELECTIONS, IN SEVERAL KEY LOCAL LABOR COUNCILS THEY OBTAINED BETWEEN 35-40 PERCENT. MORE-OVER, IF THE AUTOMATIC PRO-LABOR VOTES OF THE COOPERATIVES, PENSIONERS, THE ARABS AND YOUTH AND SPORTS GROUPS ARE ELIMINATED, AT THE INDUSTRIAL LEVEL LIKUD'S VOTING STRENGTH MIGHT BE MUCH STRONGER. THEY EVEN FEEL THAT MESHEL MIGHT PERSONALLY PREFER TO HAVE SOME LIKUD REPRESENTATIVES JOIN THE EXECUTIVE BUREAU, SINCE THIS COULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR HIM TO DEAL WITH THE GOVERNMENT ON A MERIT RATHER THAN PARTISAN POLITICAL BASIS. HOWEVER, THE PRESENT MOOD WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY AND THE ALIGNMENT WOULD APPEAR

TO MILITATE AGAINST SUCH ACCOMMODATION.
LEWIS

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